TWO OXEN

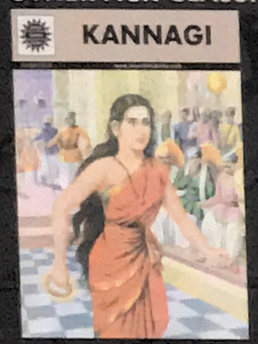
Munshi Premchand (1880 – 1936), one of the most famous writers of the 20th century, was known for his very insightful and accurate portrayal of Indian society. Even though he lived in the beginning of the last century, his stories are relevant to modern life.

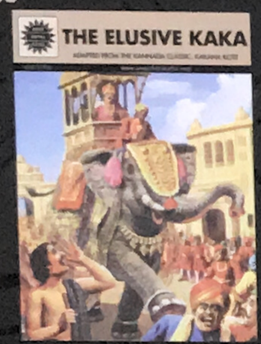
Two Oxen, or *Do Bael*, talks about compassion towards all creatures. Heera and Moti are two oxen who are shocked by the harshness of the world outside their home. It is a world that cannot understand them and only uses them, and other animals, for its own needs.

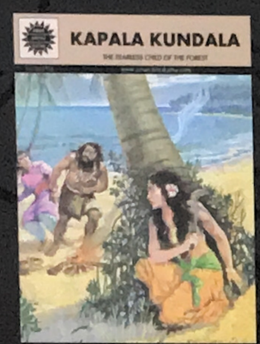
The Aged Aunt, or *Budhi Kaki*, is the story of the bond between a little girl and her aged and neglected grand-aunt. In a household where Kaki is often forgotten and left cold and hungry, it is Laadli who brings her joy with the warmth of her caring.

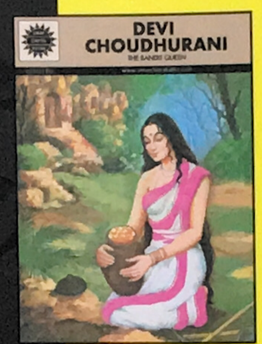
CONTEMPORARY CLASSICS

OTHER ACK CLASSICS

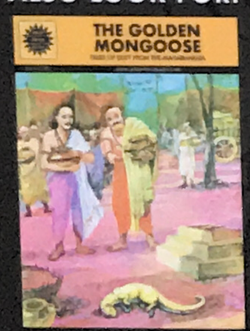




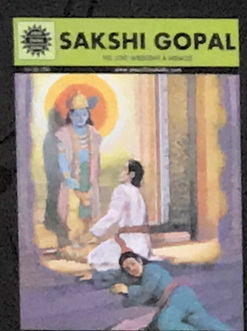




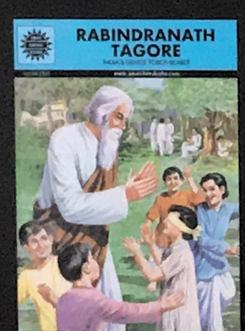
ALSO LOOK FOR:



EPICS & MYTHOLOGY



FABLES AND HUMOUR



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- NARAYAN MURTHY, CHIEF MENTOR, INFOSYS

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AMAR CHITRA KATHA

TWO OXEN

STORIES BY MUNSHI PREMCHAND

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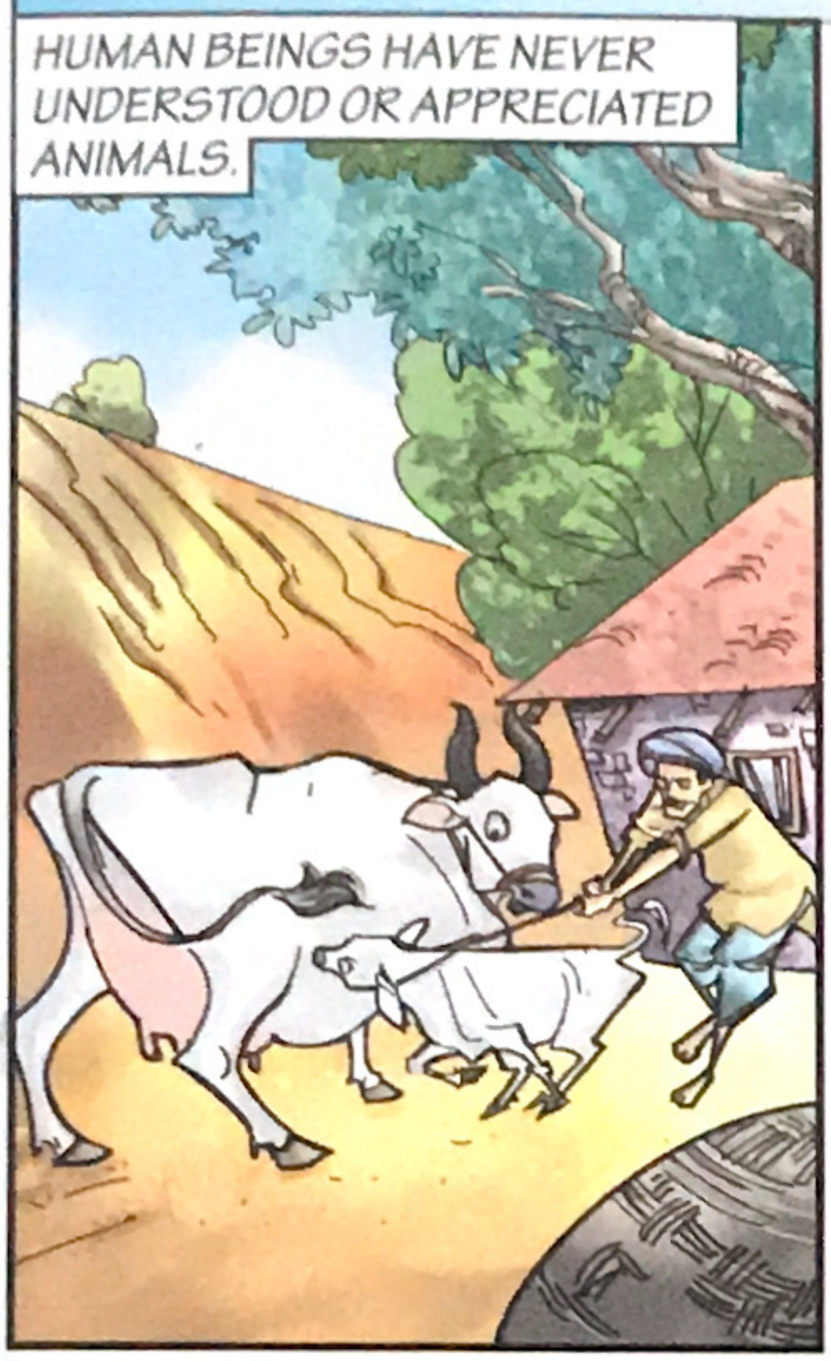
TWO OXEN

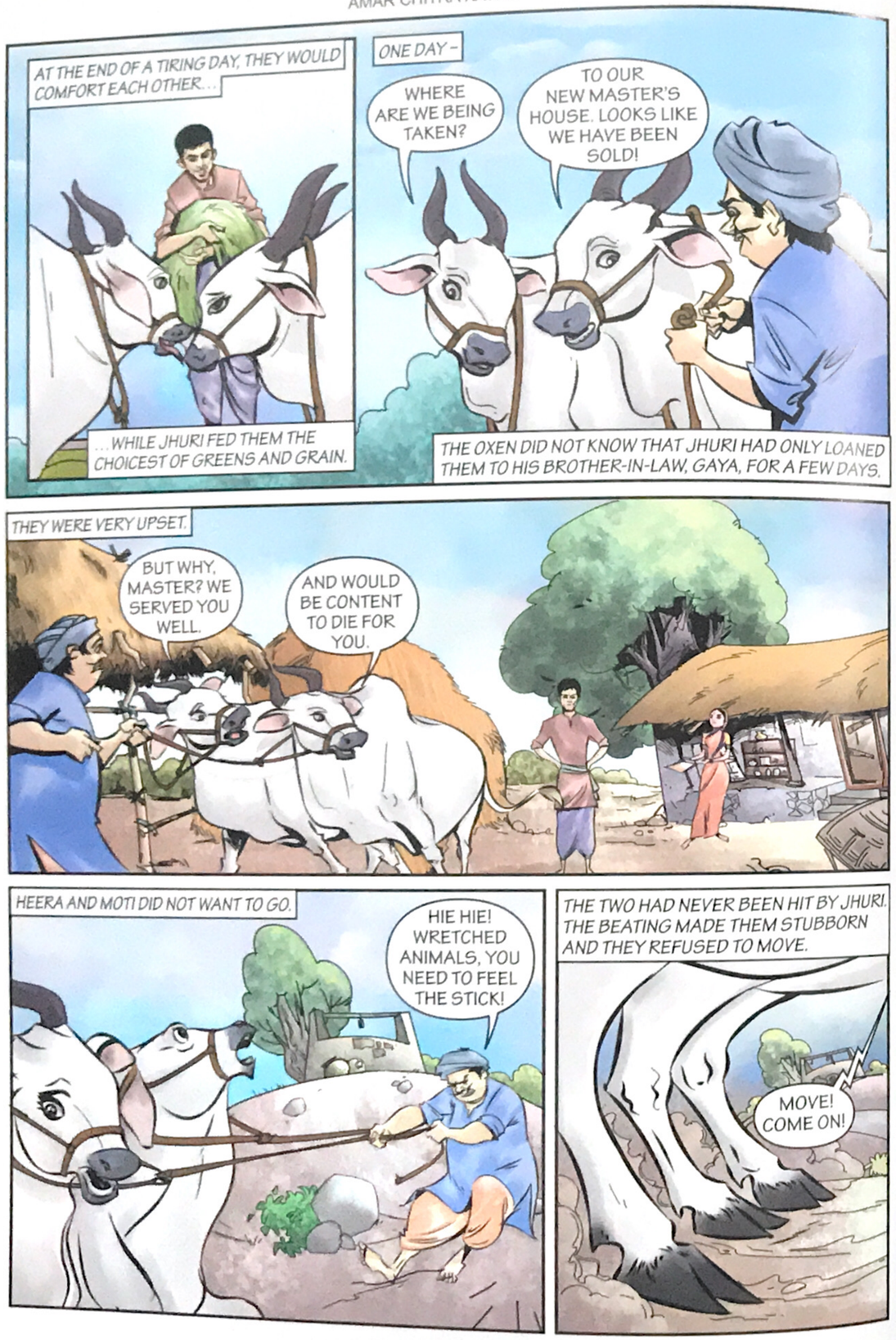


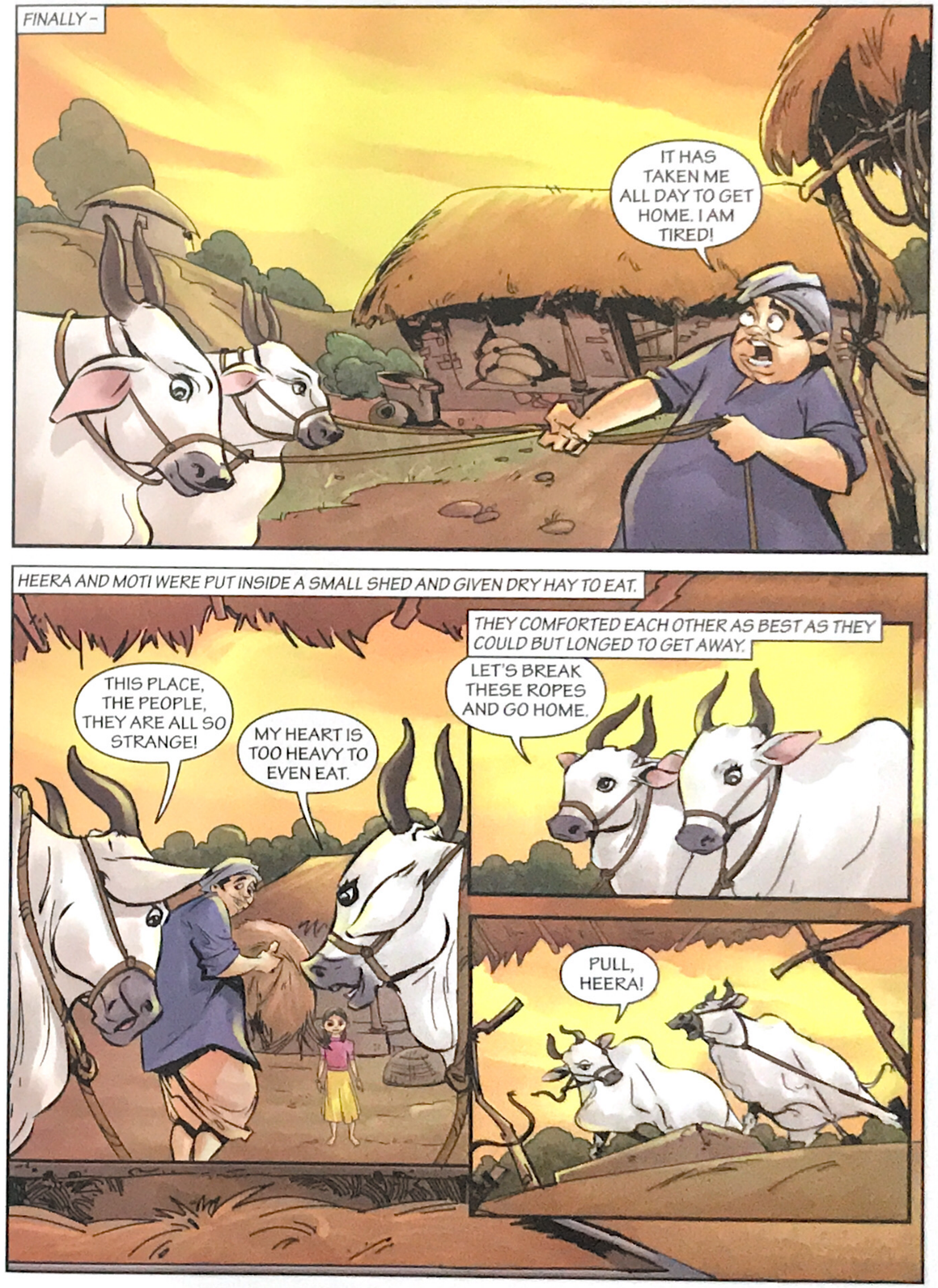
BUT JHURI WAS DIFFERENT. HE LOVED HIS OXEN, HEERA AND MOTI.
HEERA AND MOTI WERE THE BEST OF FRIENDS AND SHARED A DEEP UNDERSTANDING.

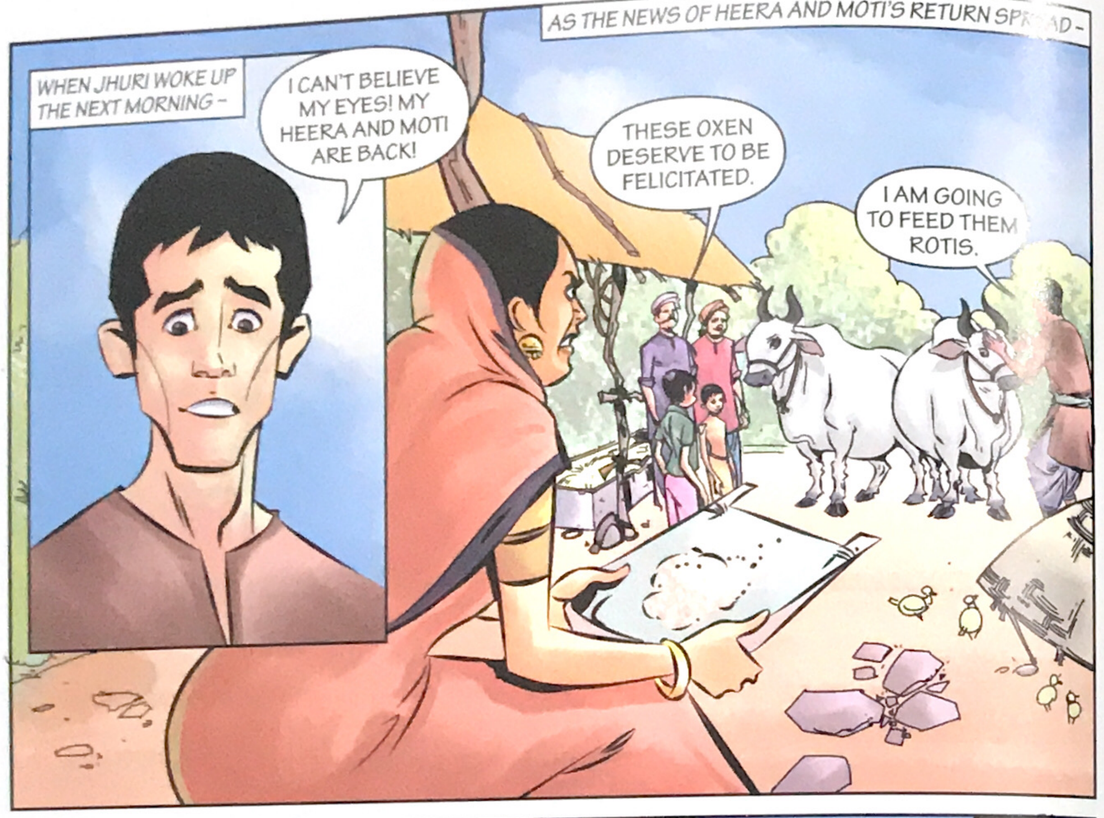
LET ME TAKE THE WEIGHT OF THE PLOUGH.

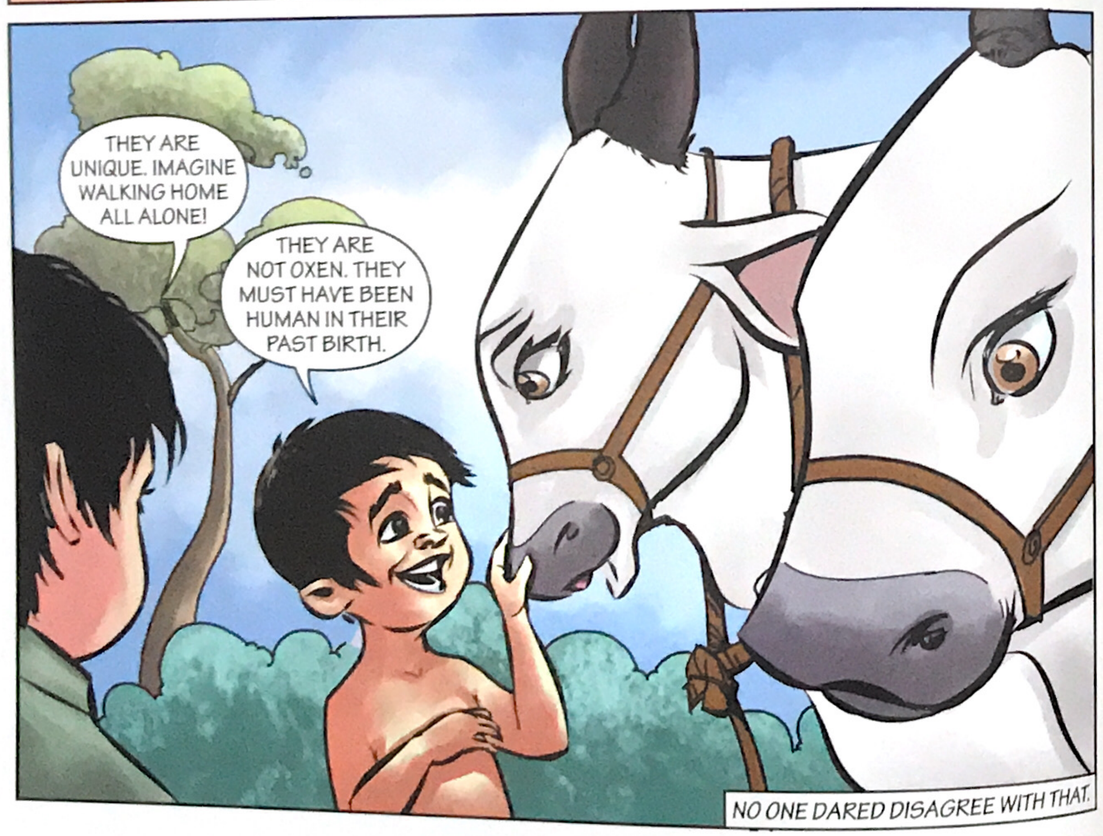
NO, NO! LET ME.

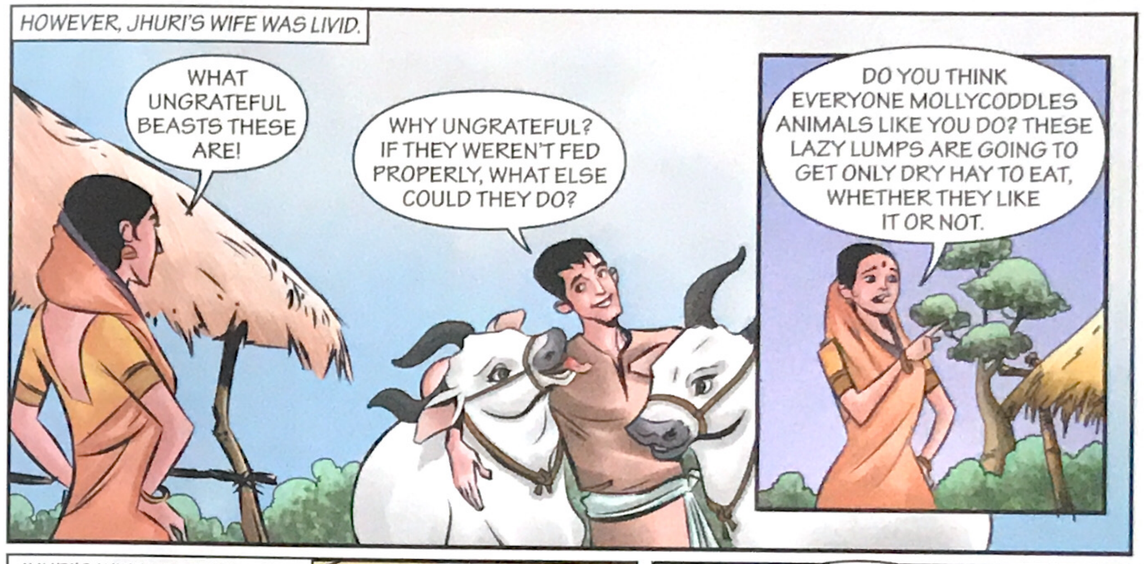
UFF! JHURI FUSSES TOO MUCH OVER THE ANIMALS!

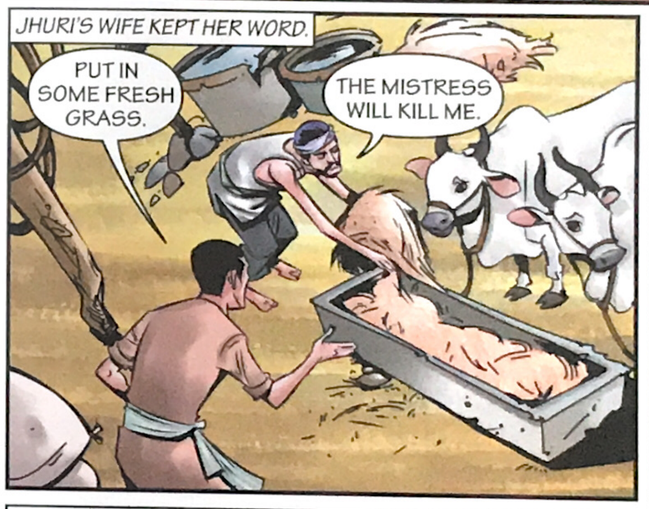

AT THE END OF A TIRING DAY, THEY WOULD COMFORT EACH OTHER...
...WHILE JHURI FED THEM THE CHOICEST OF GREENS AND GRAIN.
ONE DAY –
WHERE ARE WE BEING TAKEN?
TO OUR NEW MASTER'S HOUSE. LOOKS LIKE WE HAVE BEEN SOLD!
THE OXEN DID NOT KNOW THAT JHURI HAD ONLY LOANED THEM TO HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, GAYA, FOR A FEW DAYS.
THEY WERE VERY UPSET.
BUT WHY, MASTER? WE SERVED YOU WELL.
AND WOULD BE CONTENT TO DIE FOR YOU.
HEERA AND MOTI DID NOT WANT TO GO.
HIE HIE! WRETCHED ANIMALS, YOU NEED TO FEEL THE STICK!
THE TWO HAD NEVER BEEN HIT BY JHURI. THE BEATING MADE THEM STUBBORN AND THEY REFUSED TO MOVE.
MOVE! COME ON!


FINALLY –
IT HAS TAKEN ME ALL DAY TO GET HOME. I AM TIRED!
HEERA AND MOTI WERE PUT INSIDE A SMALL SHED AND GIVEN DRY HAY TO EAT.
THIS PLACE, THE PEOPLE, THEY ARE ALL SO STRANGE!
MY HEART IS TOO HEAVY TO EVEN EAT.
THEY COMFORTED EACH OTHER AS BEST AS THEY COULD BUT LONGED TO GET AWAY.
LET'S BREAK THESE ROPES AND GO HOME.
PULL, HEERA!


AS THE NEWS OF HEERA AND MOTI'S RETURN SPREAD –
WHEN JHURI WOKE UP THE NEXT MORNING –
I CAN'T BELIEVE MY EYES! MY HEERA AND MOTI ARE BACK!
THESE OXEN DESERVE TO BE FELICITATED.
I AM GOING TO FEED THEM ROTIS.

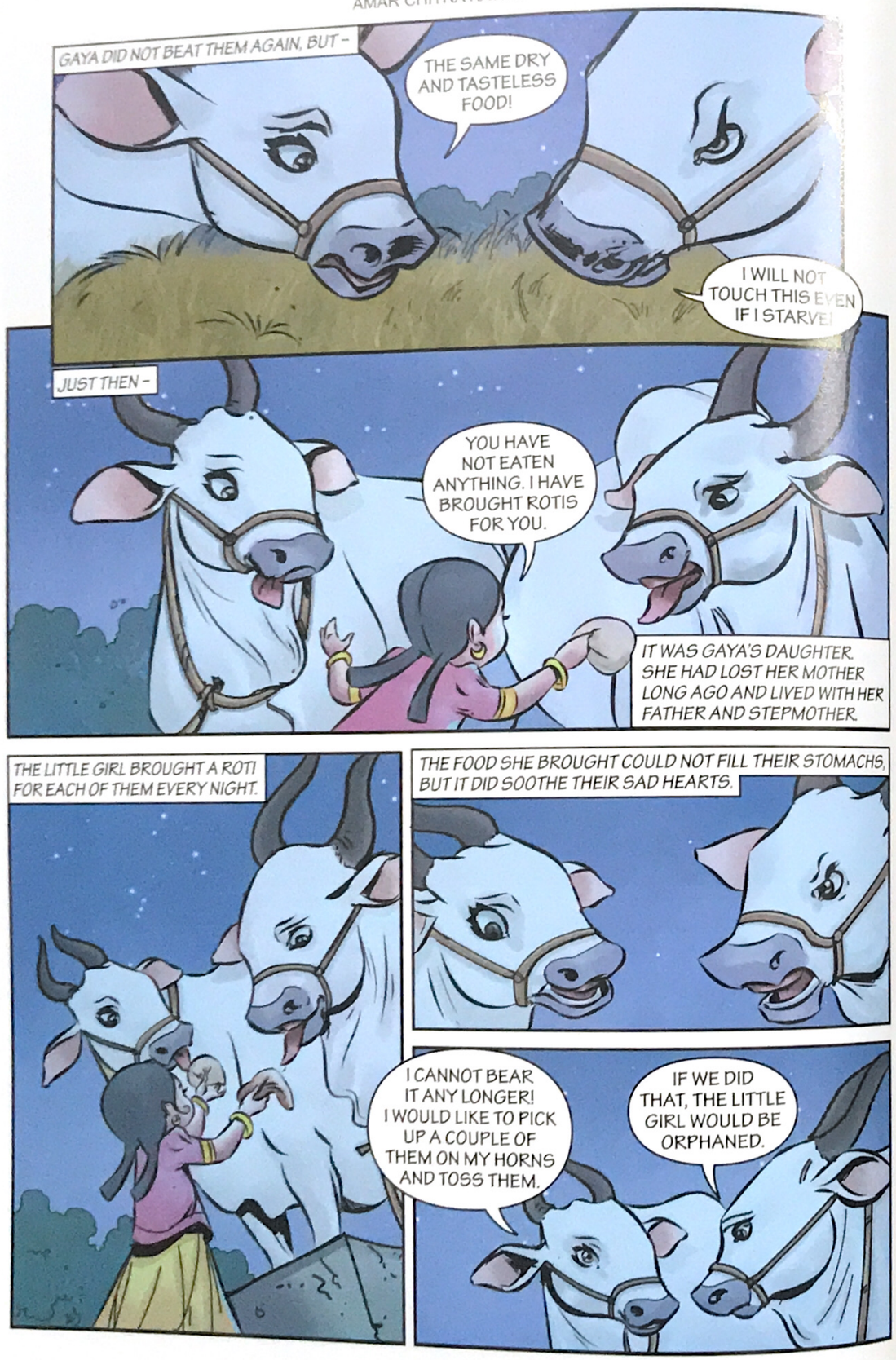

THEY ARE UNIQUE. IMAGINE WALKING HOME ALL ALONE!
THEY ARE NOT OXEN. THEY MUST HAVE BEEN HUMAN IN THEIR PAST BIRTH.
NO ONE DARED DISAGREE WITH THAT.


HOWEVER, JHURI'S WIFE WAS LIVID.
WHAT UNGRATEFUL BEASTS THESE ARE!
WHY UNGRATEFUL? IF THEY WEREN'T FED PROPERLY, WHAT ELSE COULD THEY DO?
DO YOU THINK EVERYONE MOLLYCODDLES ANIMALS LIKE YOU DO? THESE LAZY LUMPS ARE GOING TO GET ONLY DRY HAY TO EAT, WHETHER THEY LIKE IT OR NOT.


JHURI'S WIFE KEPT HER WORD.
PUT IN SOME FRESH GRASS.
THE MISTRESS WILL KILL ME.

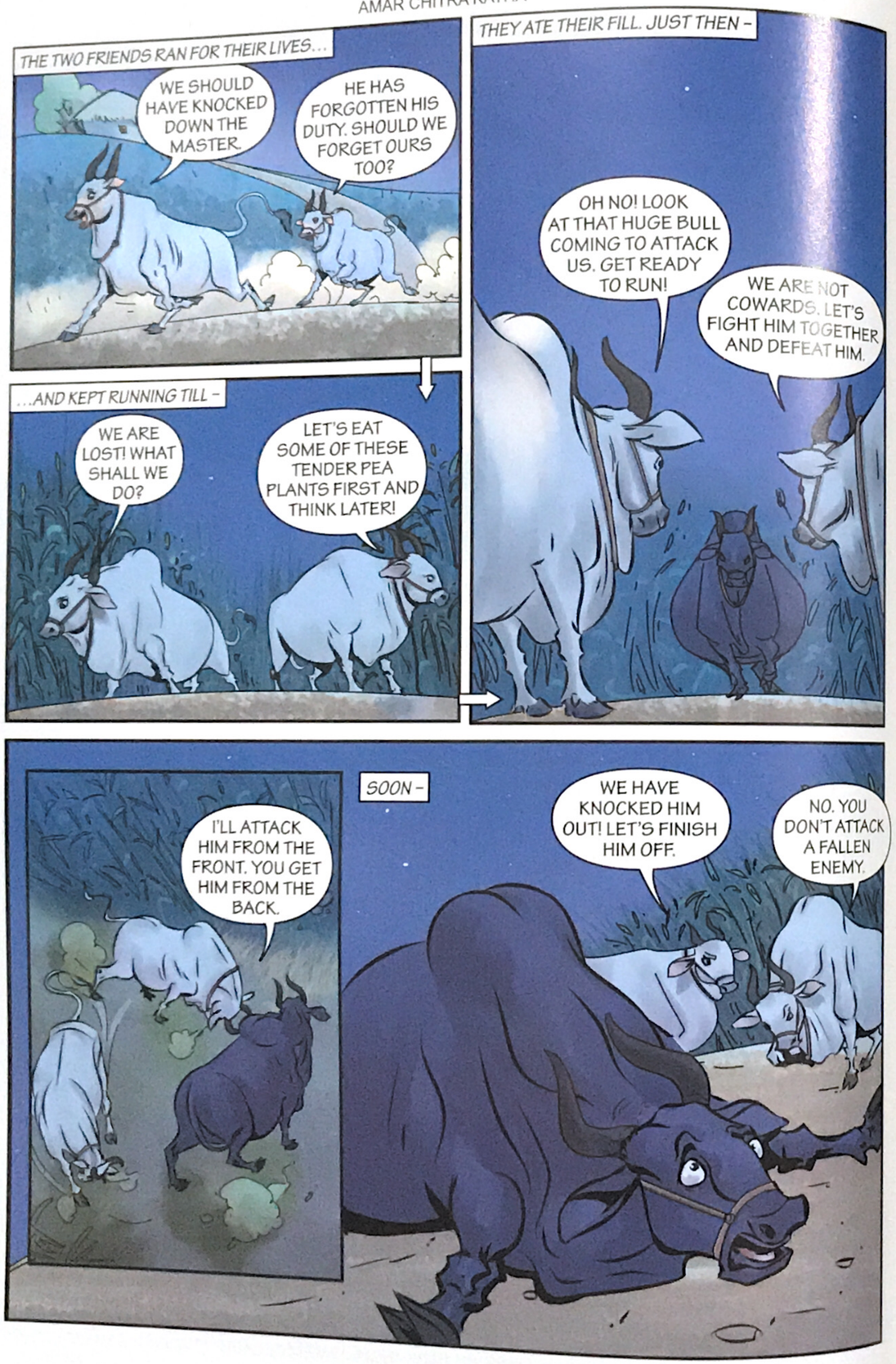
SHE NEEDN'T COME TO KNOW.
AND WHEN SHE DOES, YOU WILL NOT STAND BY ME.

THE NEXT DAY, GAYA ARRIVED TO TAKE THEM AGAIN.
CAREFUL! YOU WILL DRAG THE CART INTO THE DITCH IN YOUR ANGER.
I DON'T WANT TO GO WITH THIS MAN.
HEERA WAS THE PATIENT ONE.



*CATTLE OWNERS OFTEN PUT A RING OR ROPE THROUGH THEIR ANIMAL'S NOSE BECAUSE PULLING IT CAUSES INTENSE PAIN WHICH MAKES THE ANIMAL OBEY OUT OF FEAR.

^FATHER

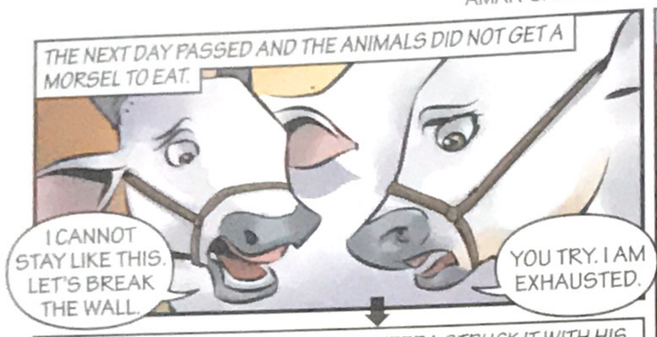

THE TWO FRIENDS RAN FOR THEIR LIVES...
WE SHOULD HAVE KNOCKED DOWN THE MASTER.
HE HAS FORGOTTEN HIS DUTY. SHOULD WE FORGET OURS TOO?
...AND KEPT RUNNING TILL –
WE ARE LOST! WHAT SHALL WE DO?
LET'S EAT SOME OF THESE TENDER PEA PLANTS FIRST AND THINK LATER!
THEY ATE THEIR FILL. JUST THEN –
OH NO! LOOK AT THAT HUGE BULL COMING TO ATTACK US. GET READY TO RUN!
WE ARE NOT COWARDS. LET'S FIGHT HIM TOGETHER AND DEFEAT HIM.
I'LL ATTACK HIM FROM THE FRONT. YOU GET HIM FROM THE BACK.
SOON –
WE HAVE KNOCKED HIM OUT! LET'S FINISH HIM OFF.
NO. YOU DON'T ATTACK A FALLEN ENEMY.

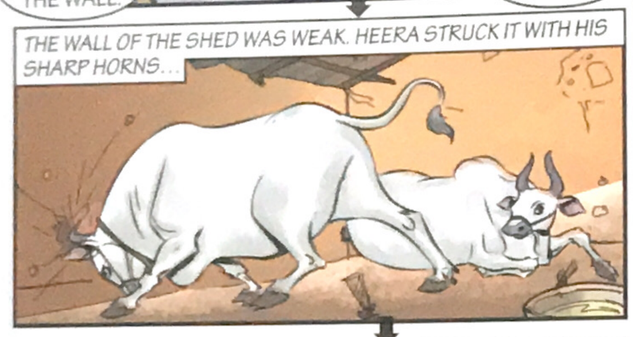
ALL RIGHT, THEN. CAN I EAT SOME MORE?
OH NO! THOSE MEN ARE COMING TO CATCH MOTI.

HEERA RUSHED TO BE WITH HIS FRIEND AND BEFORE LONG...

...BOTH HAD BEEN CAUGHT AND TIED.

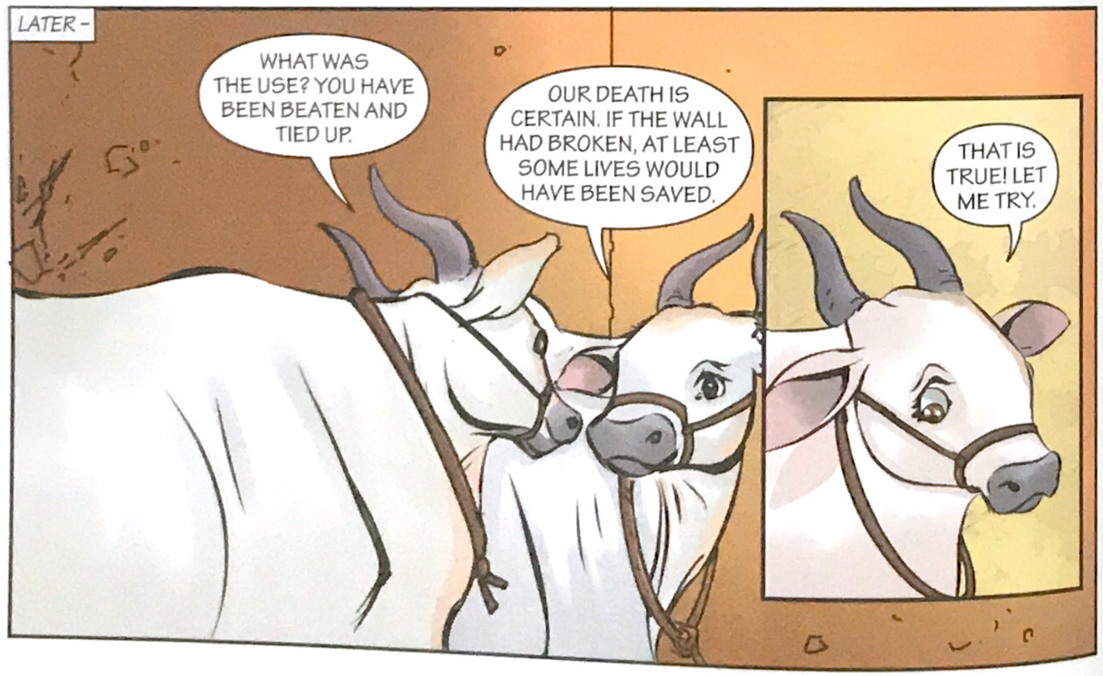
SOON, THEY FOUND THEMSELVES IN A DARK SHED WITH A NUMBER OF OTHER THIN AND SCARED-LOOKING ANIMALS.
WHAT A DISMAL ROOM!

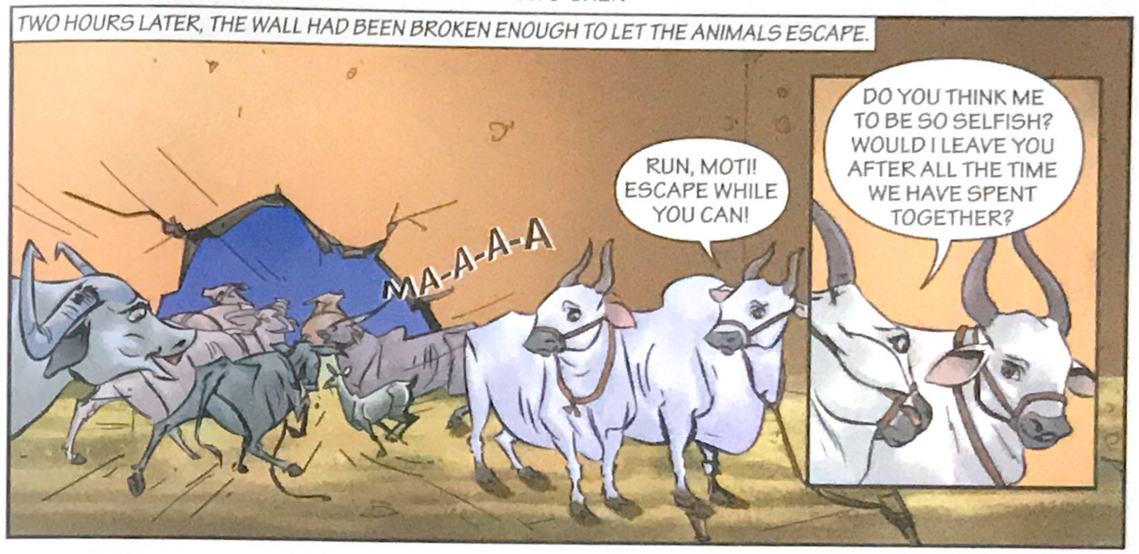

THE NEXT DAY PASSED AND THE ANIMALS DID NOT GET A MORSEL TO EAT.
I CANNOT STAY LIKE THIS. LET'S BREAK THE WALL.
YOU TRY. I AM EXHAUSTED.

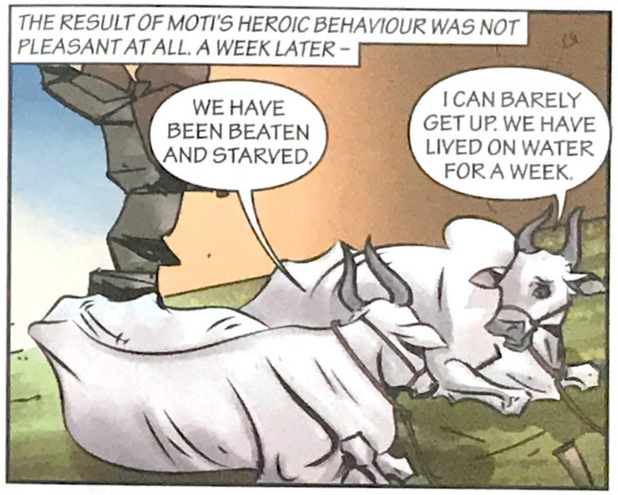

THE WALL OF THE SHED WAS WEAK. HEERA STRUCK IT WITH HIS SHARP HORNS...

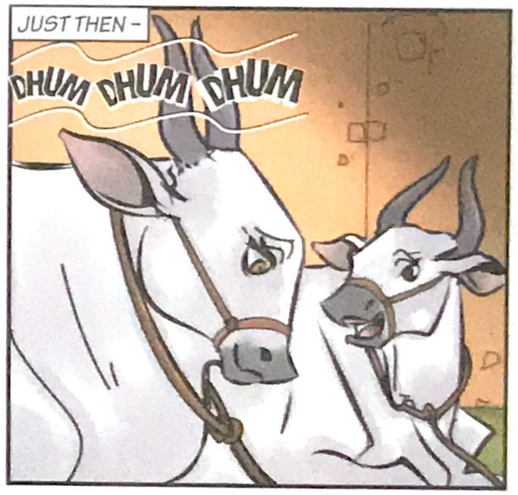
...TILL -

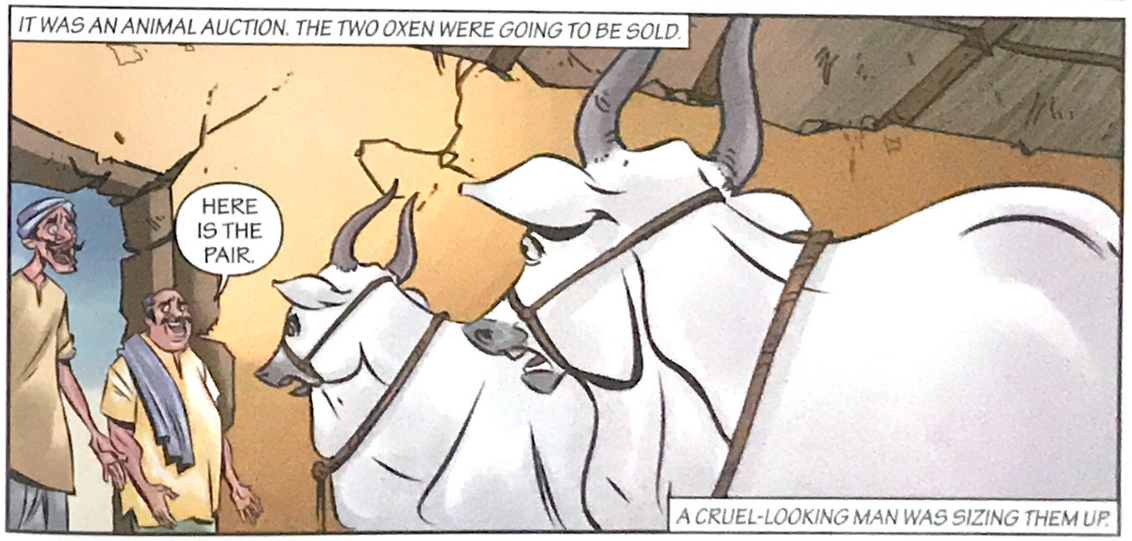
BUT -
TRYING TO BREAK THE WALL! A TASTE OF MY STICK WILL CURE YOU!

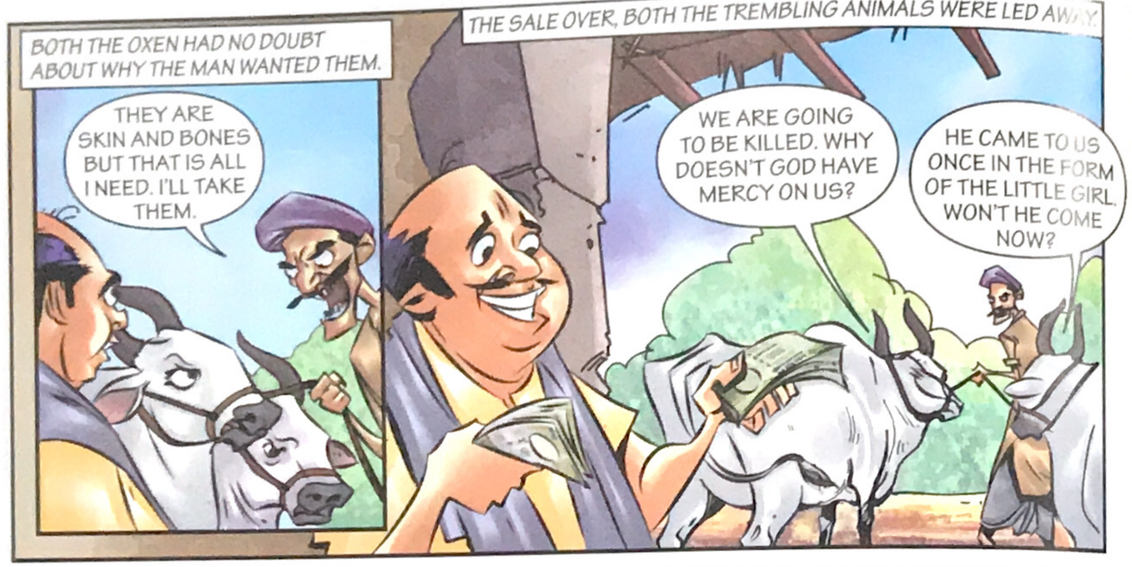

LATER -
WHAT WAS THE USE? YOU HAVE BEEN BEATEN AND TIED UP.
OUR DEATH IS CERTAIN. IF THE WALL HAD BROKEN, AT LEAST SOME LIVES WOULD HAVE BEEN SAVED.
THAT IS TRUE! LET ME TRY.

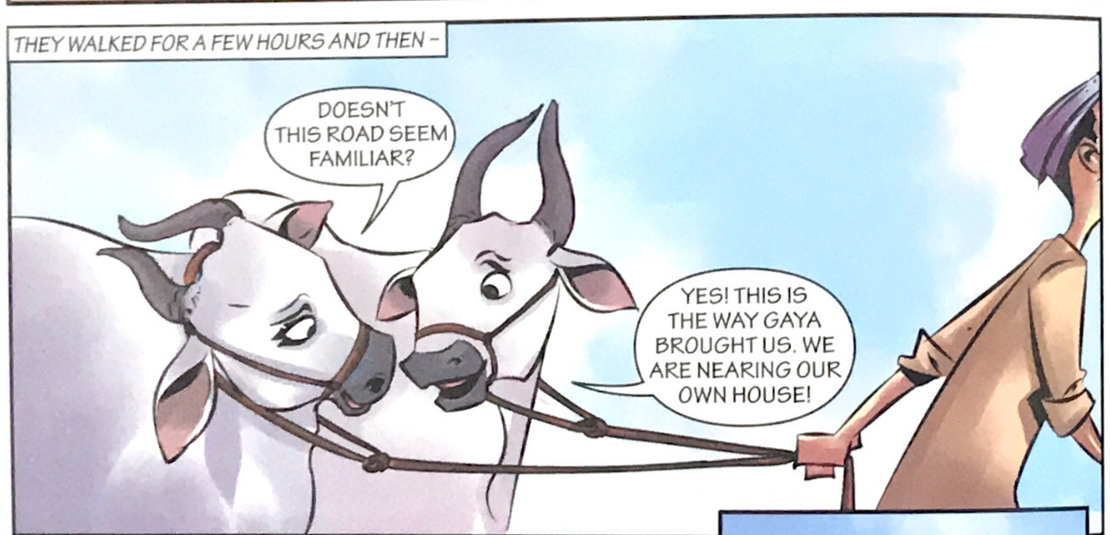

TWO HOURS LATER, THE WALL HAD BEEN BROKEN ENOUGH TO LET THE ANIMALS ESCAPE.
MA-A-A-A
RUN, MOTI! ESCAPE WHILE YOU CAN!
DO YOU THINK ME TO BE SO SELFISH? WOULD I LEAVE YOU AFTER ALL THE TIME WE HAVE SPENT TOGETHER?

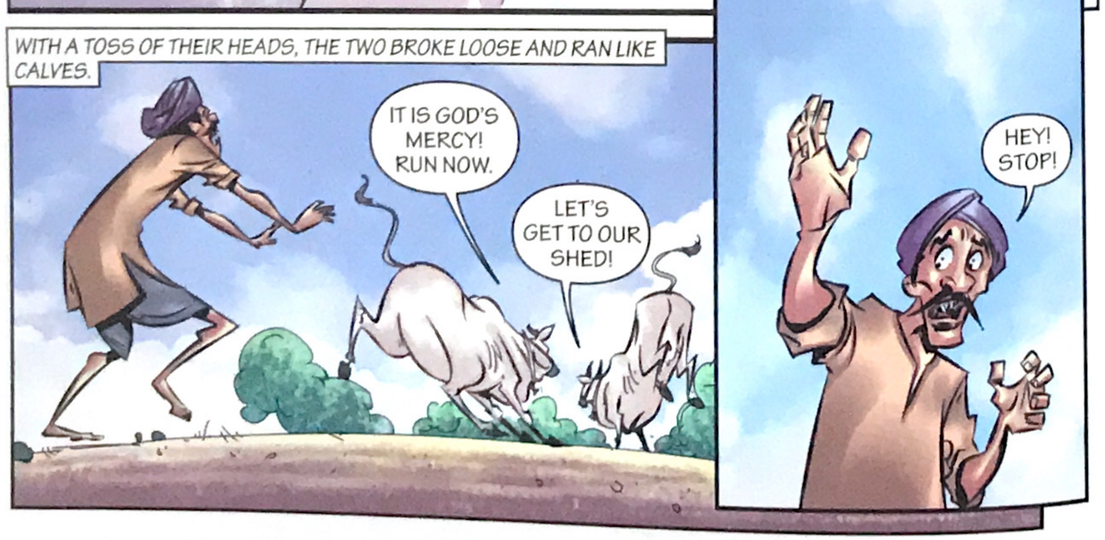

THE RESULT OF MOTI'S HEROIC BEHAVIOUR WAS NOT PLEASANT AT ALL. A WEEK LATER -
WE HAVE BEEN BEATEN AND STARVED.
I CAN BARELY GET UP. WE HAVE LIVED ON WATER FOR A WEEK.

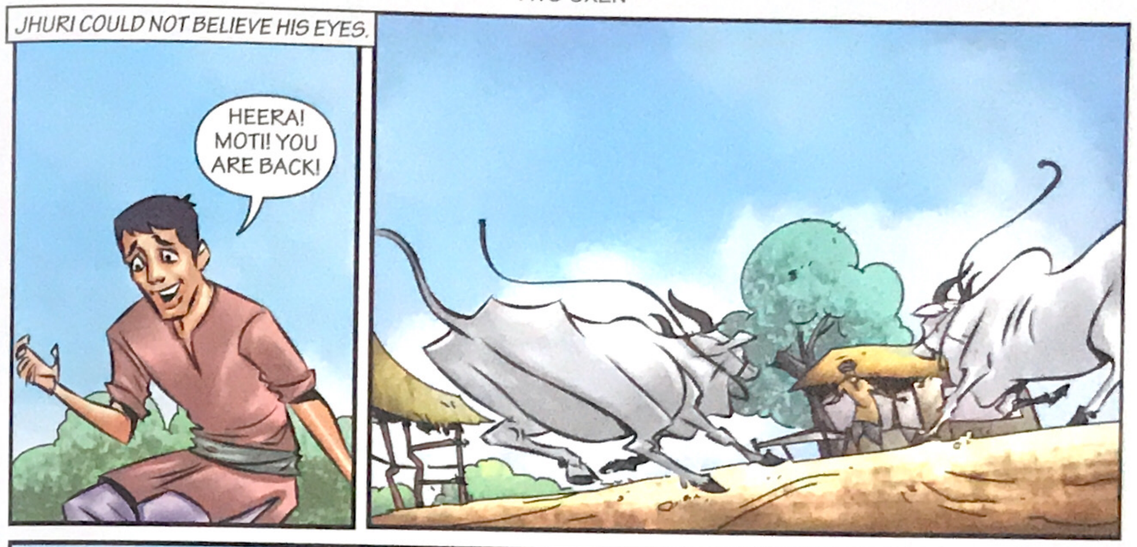

JUST THEN -
DHUM DHUM DHUM

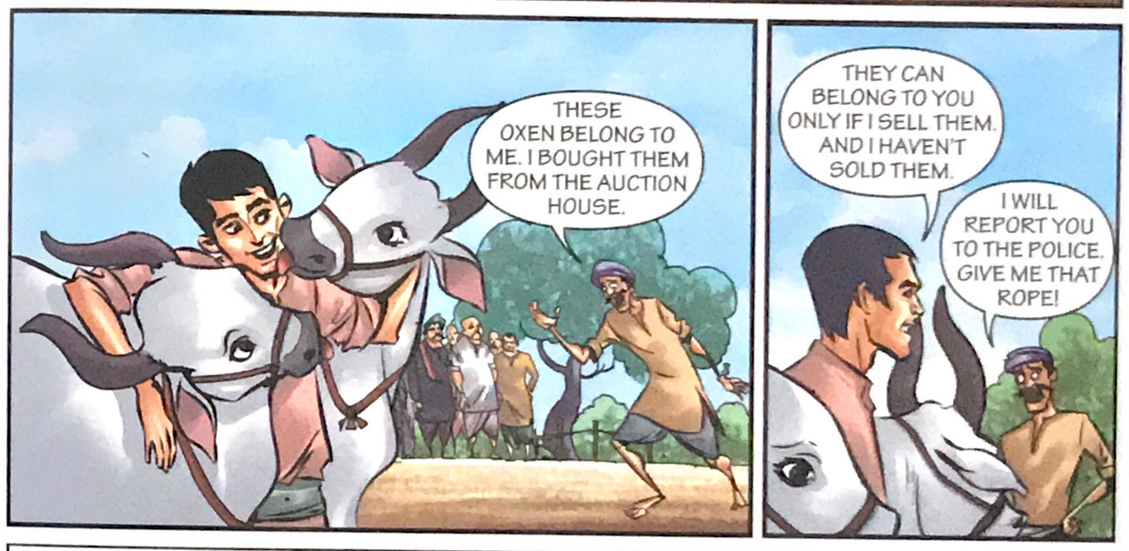

IT WAS AN ANIMAL AUCTION. THE TWO OXEN WERE GOING TO BE SOLD.
HERE IS THE PAIR.
A CRUEL-LOOKING MAN WAS SIZING THEM UP.

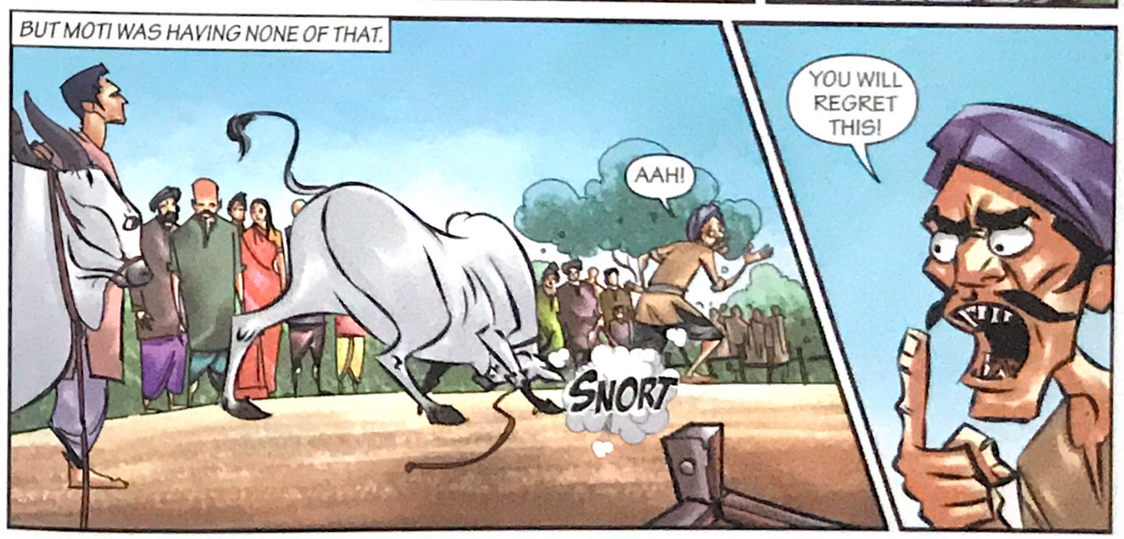

BOTH THE OXEN HAD NO DOUBT ABOUT WHY THE MAN WANTED THEM.
THEY ARE SKIN AND BONES BUT THAT IS ALL I NEED. I'LL TAKE THEM.
THE SALE OVER, BOTH THE TREMBLING ANIMALS WERE LED AWAY.
WE ARE GOING TO BE KILLED. WHY DOESN'T GOD HAVE MERCY ON US?
HE CAME TO US ONCE IN THE FORM OF THE LITTLE GIRL. WON'T HE COME NOW?

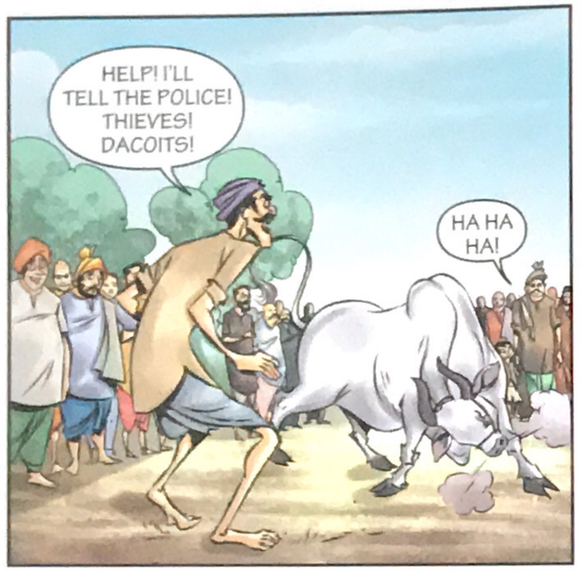

THEY WALKED FOR A FEW HOURS AND THEN –
DOESN'T THIS ROAD SEEM FAMILIAR?
YES! THIS IS THE WAY GAYA BROUGHT US. WE ARE NEARING OUR OWN HOUSE!

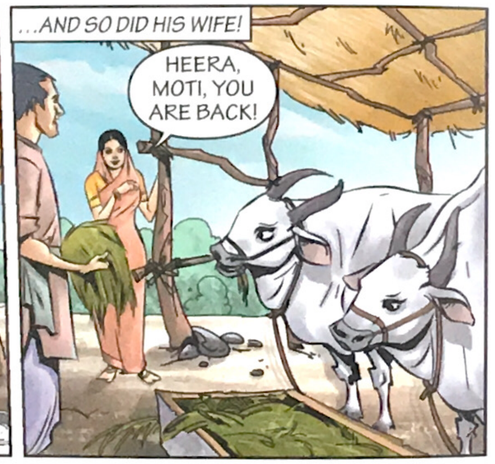

WITH A TOSS OF THEIR HEADS, THE TWO BROKE LOOSE AND RAN LIKE CALVES.
IT IS GOD'S MERCY! RUN NOW.
LET'S GET TO OUR SHED!
HEY! STOP!

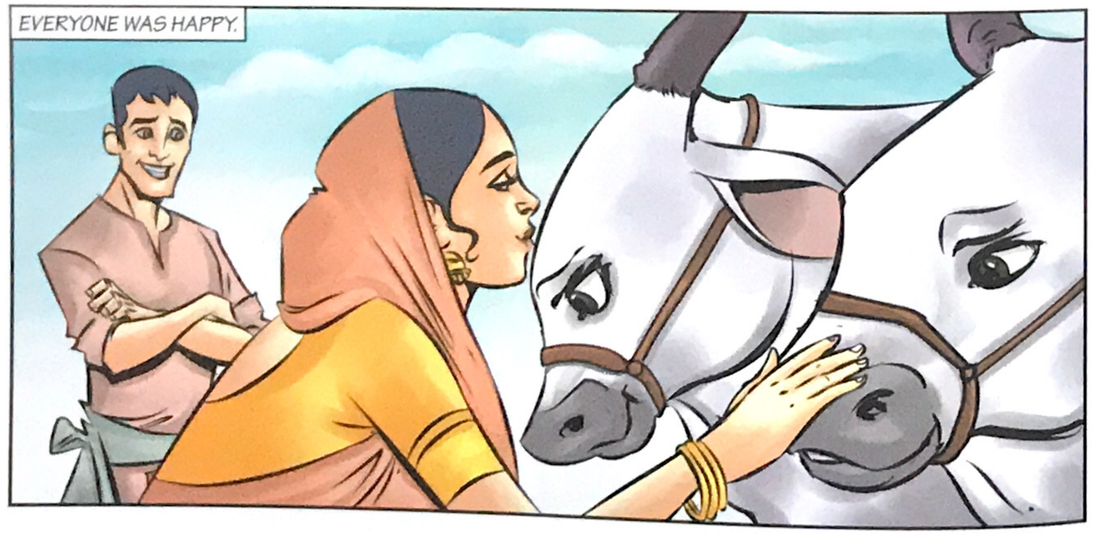

JHURI COULD NOT BELIEVE HIS EYES.
HEERA! MOTI! YOU ARE BACK!


THESE OXEN BELONG TO ME. I BOUGHT THEM FROM THE AUCTION HOUSE.
THEY CAN BELONG TO YOU ONLY IF I SELL THEM. AND I HAVEN'T SOLD THEM.
I WILL REPORT YOU TO THE POLICE. GIVE ME THAT ROPE!

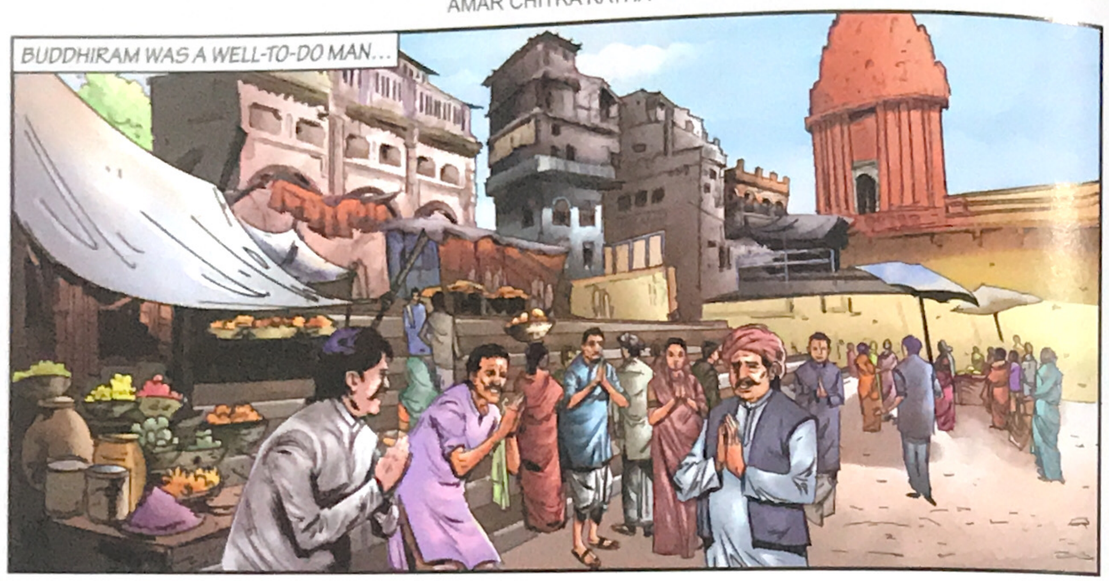

BUT MOTI WAS HAVING NONE OF THAT.
AAH!
SNORT
YOU WILL REGRET THIS!

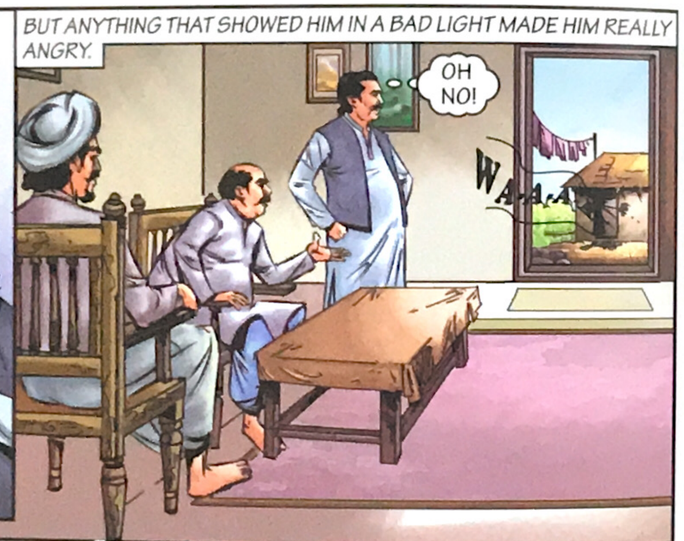


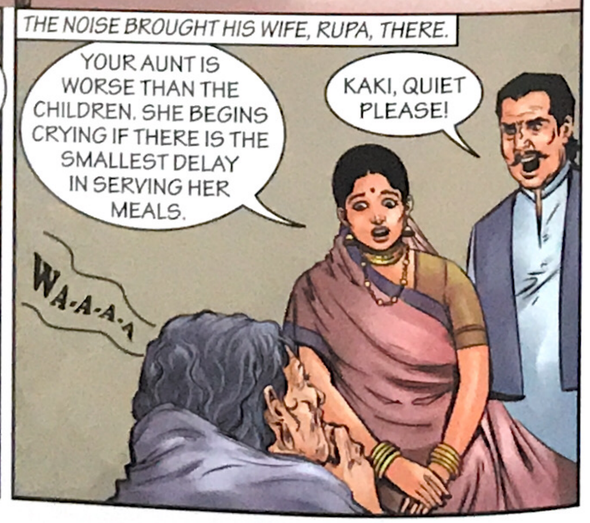




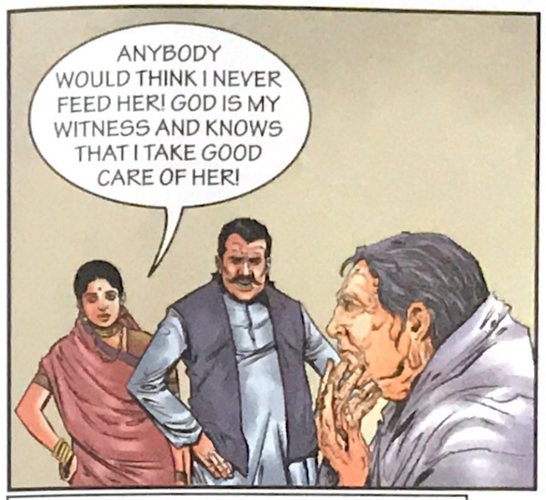
BUDHI KAKI
OR
THE AGED AUNT

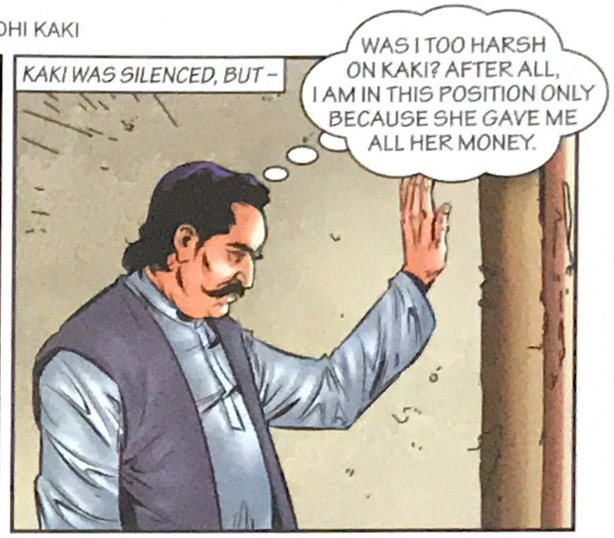


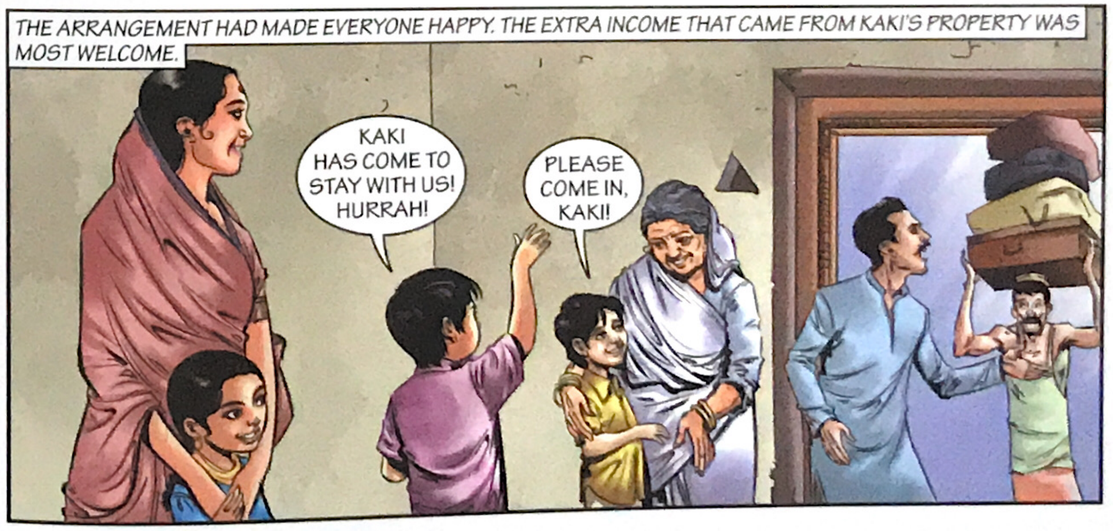


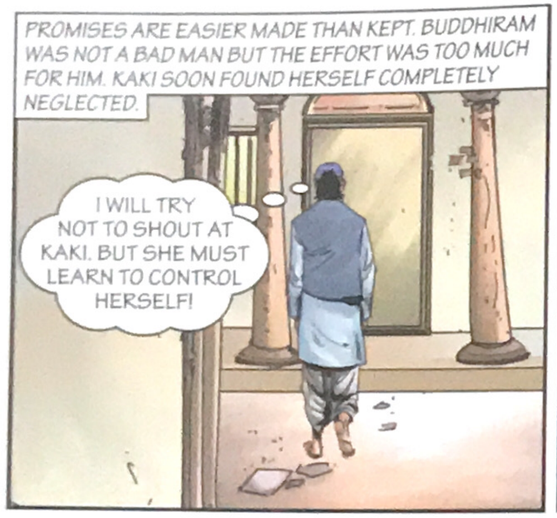


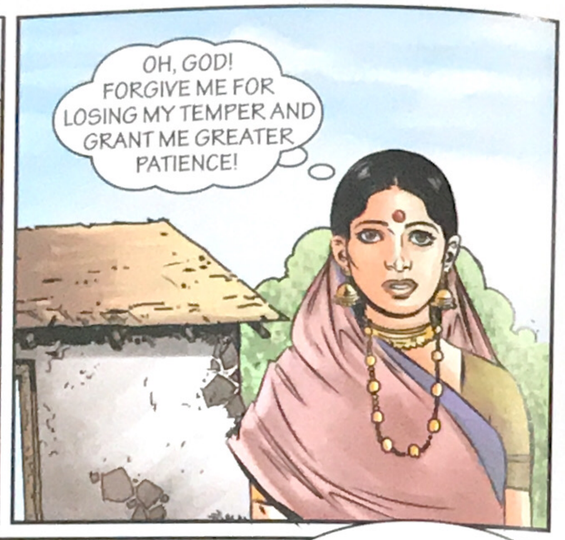
*FATHER'S BROTHER'S WIFE

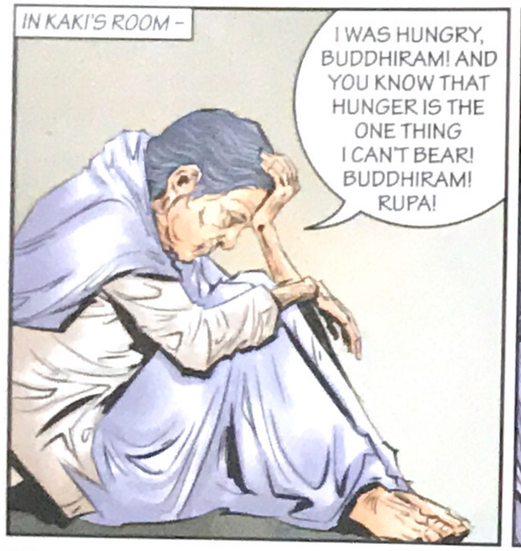


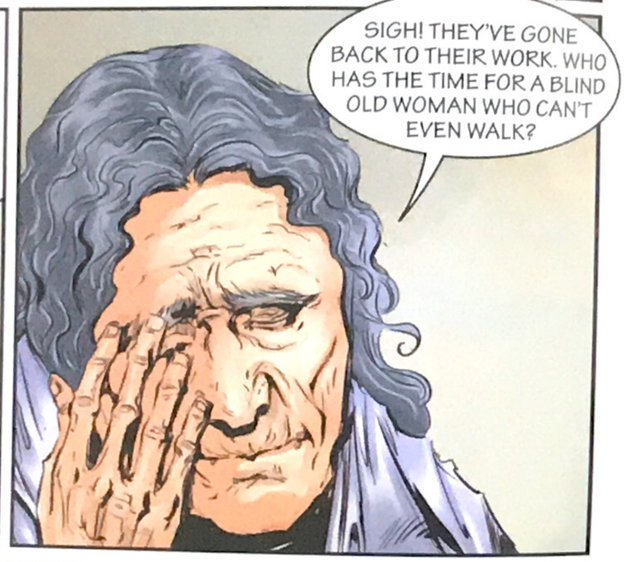


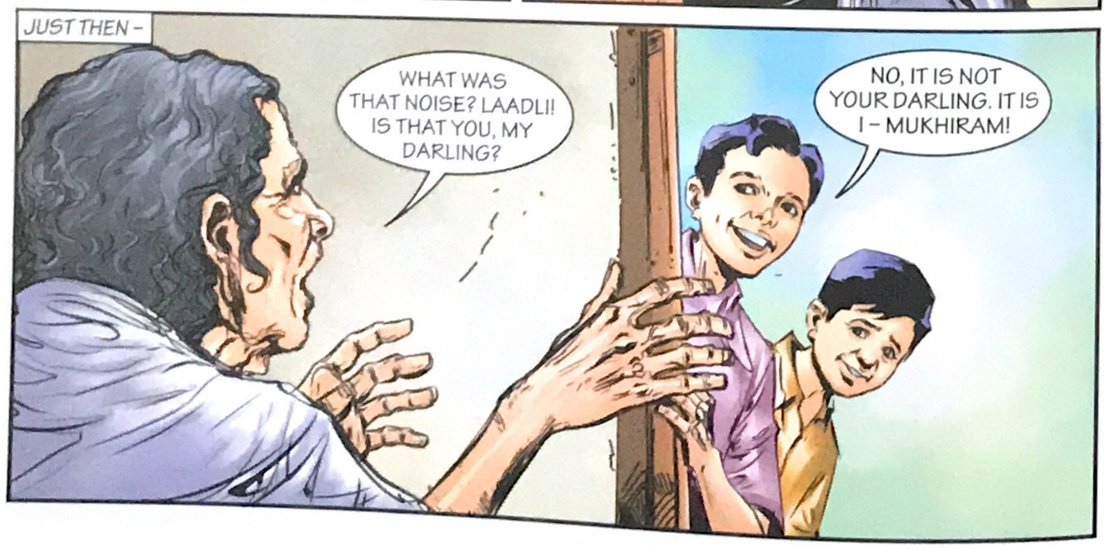


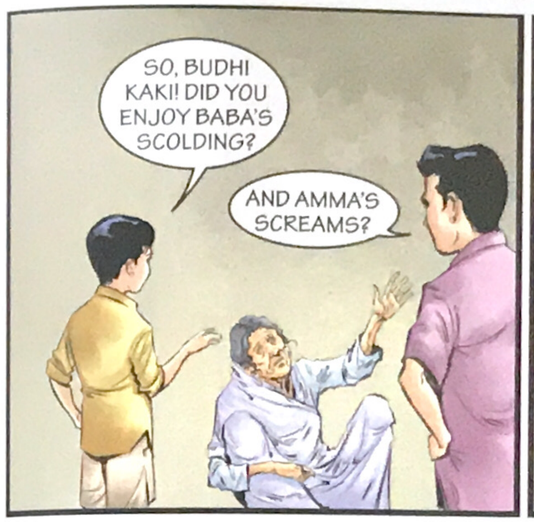

PROMISES ARE EASIER MADE THAN KEPT. BUDDHIRAM WAS NOT A BAD MAN BUT THE EFFORT WAS TOO MUCH FOR HIM. KAKI SOON FOUND HERSELF COMPLETELY NEGLECTED.
I WILL TRY NOT TO SHOUT AT KAKI. BUT SHE MUST LEARN TO CONTROL HERSELF!


OH, GOD! FORGIVE ME FOR LOSING MY TEMPER AND GRANT ME GREATER PATIENCE!

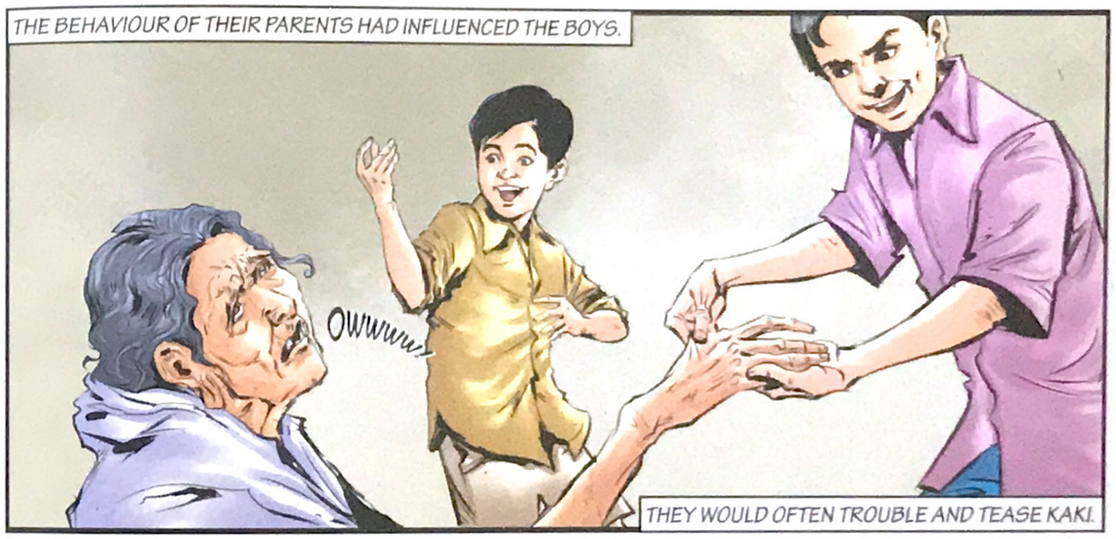

IN KAKI'S ROOM –
I WAS HUNGRY, BUDDHIRAM! AND YOU KNOW THAT HUNGER IS THE ONE THING I CAN'T BEAR! BUDDHIRAM! RUPA!

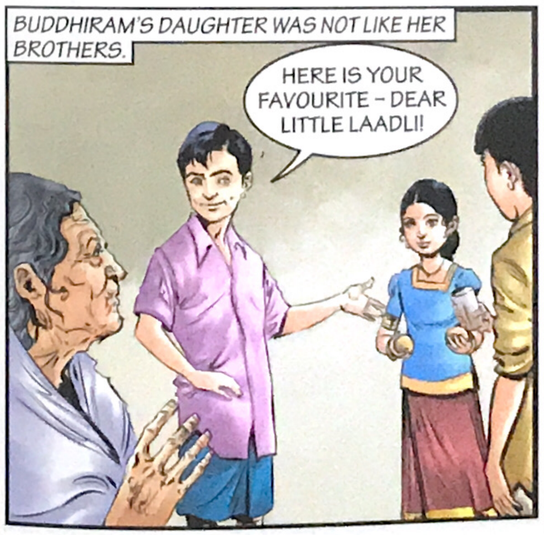

SIGH! THEY'VE GONE BACK TO THEIR WORK. WHO HAS THE TIME FOR A BLIND OLD WOMAN WHO CAN'T EVEN WALK?

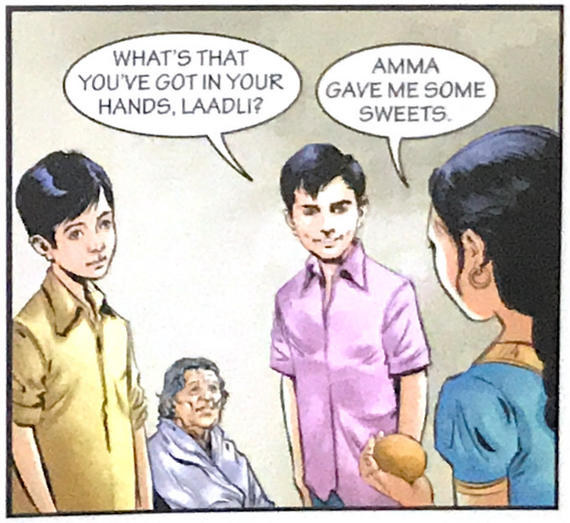

JUST THEN –
WHAT WAS THAT NOISE? LAADLI! IS THAT YOU, MY DARLING?
NO, IT IS NOT YOUR DARLING. IT IS I – MUKHIRAM!


SO, BUDHI KAKI! DID YOU ENJOY BABA'S SCOLDING?
AND AMMA'S SCREAMS?

DON'T SPEAK LIKE THAT ABOUT YOUR PARENTS. THEY CAME TO SEE HOW I WAS.
REALLY?

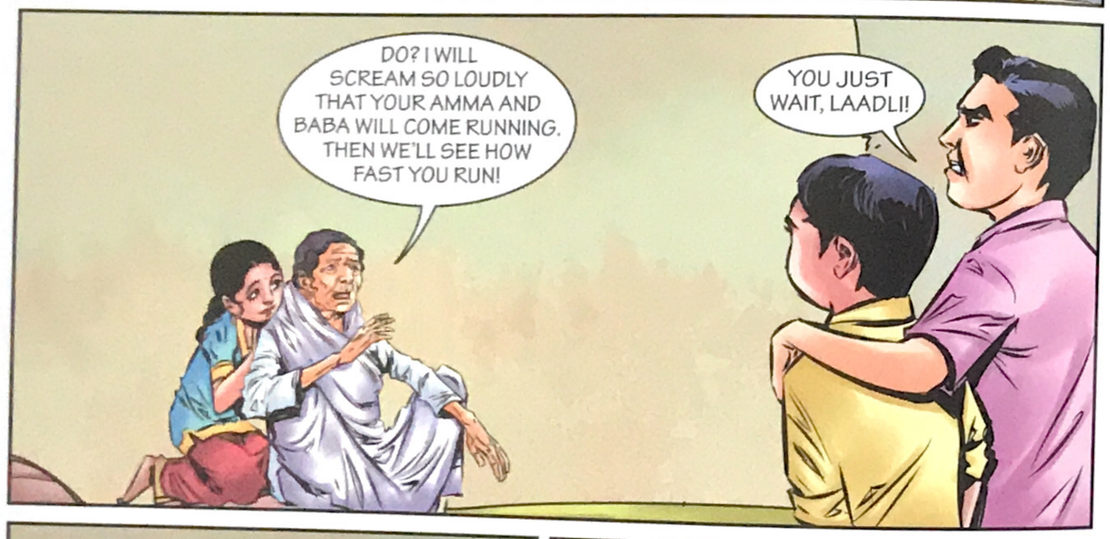

THE BEHAVIOUR OF THEIR PARENTS HAD INFLUENCED THE BOYS.
OWWWW!
THEY WOULD OFTEN TROUBLE AND TEASE KAKI.


BUDDHIRAM'S DAUGHTER WAS NOT LIKE HER BROTHERS.
HERE IS YOUR FAVOURITE – DEAR LITTLE LAADLI!


WHAT'S THAT YOU'VE GOT IN YOUR HANDS, LAADLI?
AMMA GAVE ME SOME SWEETS.

GIVE ME SOME!
NO! GO GET YOUR OWN SHARE.

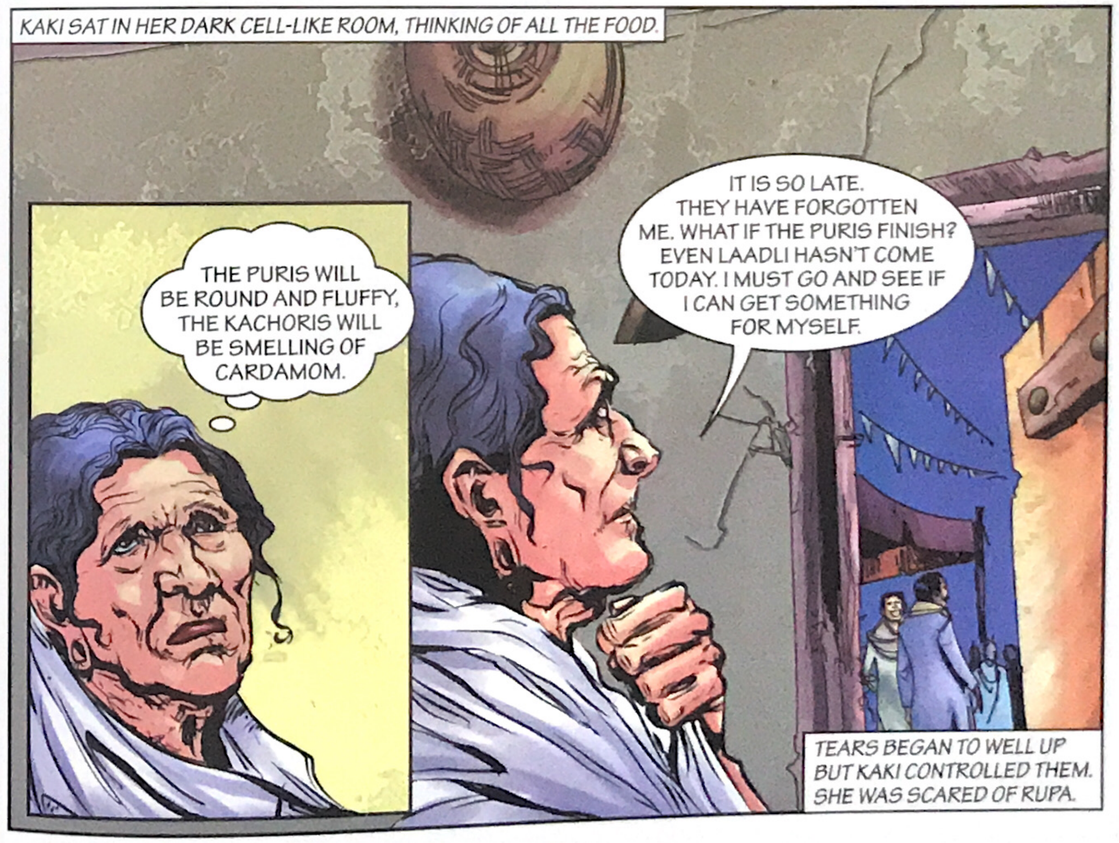
GO AWAY, YOU BAD BOYS! LEAVE LAADLI ALONE.
OR? WHAT WILL YOU DO, BUDHI KAKI?

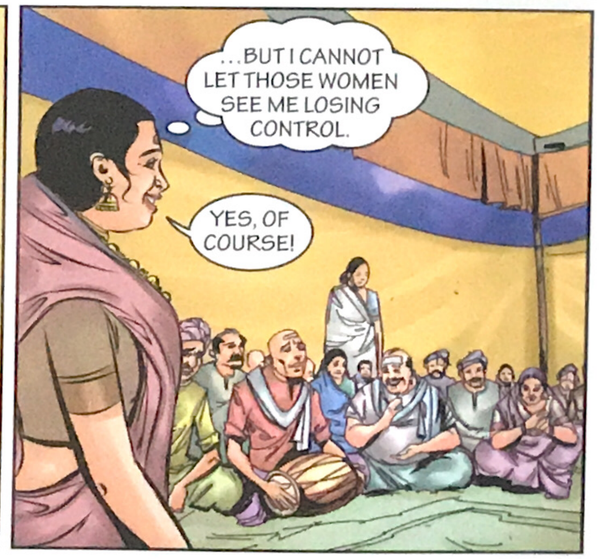

DO? I WILL SCREAM SO LOUDLY THAT YOUR AMMA AND BABA WILL COME RUNNING. THEN WE'LL SEE HOW FAST YOU RUN!
YOU JUST WAIT, LAADLI!

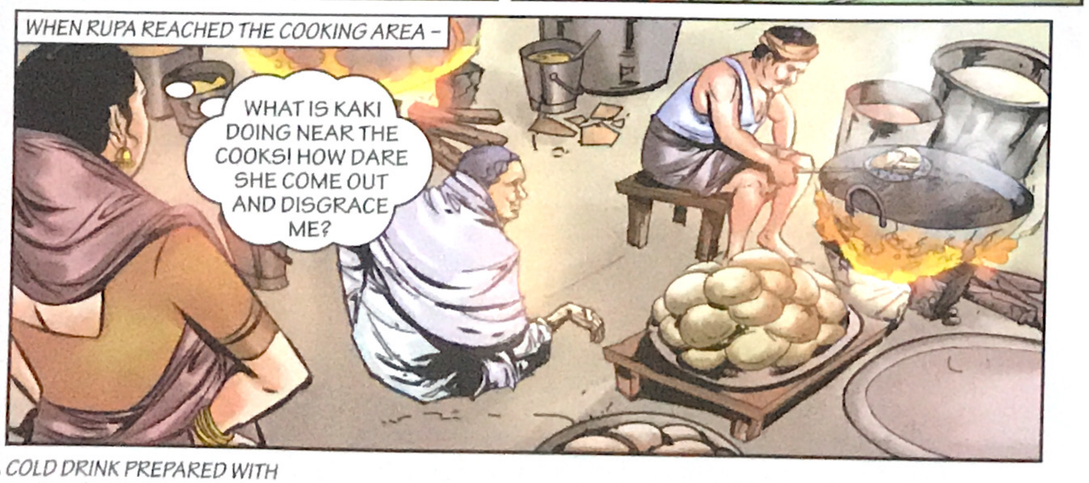
HUH! THEY CAN'T HURT ME WHEN I AM WITH YOU, KAKI.
AS IF I WILL LET THEM. YOU COME TO ME, MY DARLING, IF THEY EVER BOTHER YOU.

KAKI, LOOK! I'VE BROUGHT MY SWEETS TO SHARE WITH YOU.
BLESS YOU, CHILD!

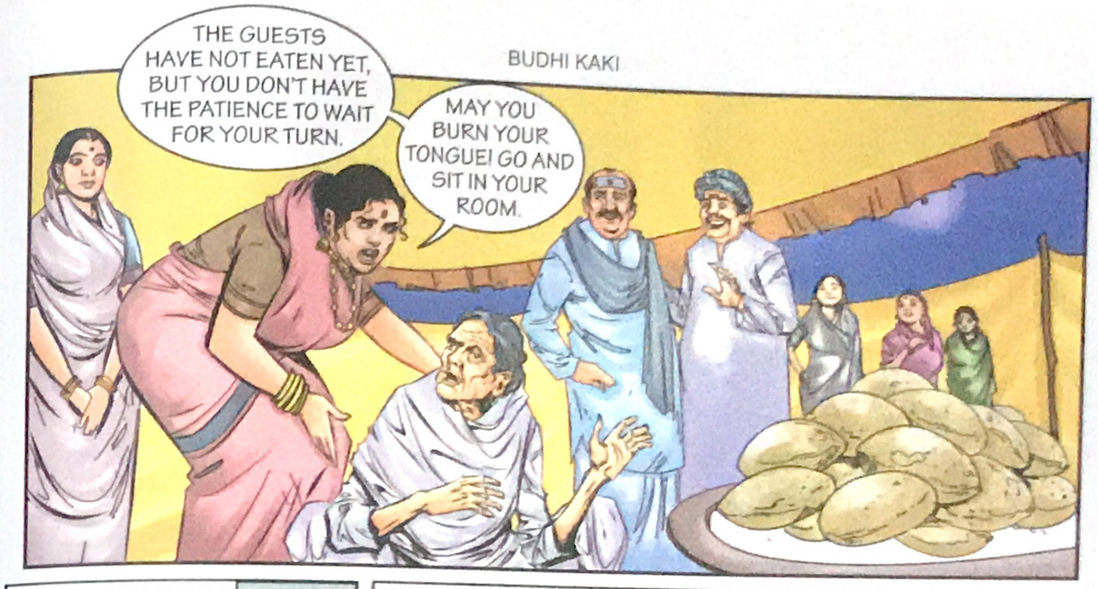
LAADLI IS THE ONLY ONE IN THIS HOUSE WHO LOVES ME. WHAT WOULD I DO WITHOUT HER?
THE YEARS PASSED. IT WAS THE NIGHT OF MUKHIRAM'S ENGAGEMENT. THE HOUSE RESOUNDED WITH THE MUSIC OF THE FLUTE.

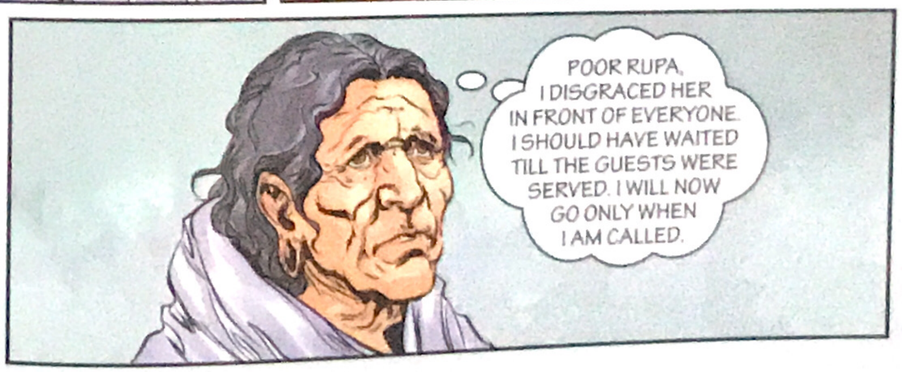

KAKI SAT IN HER DARK CELL-LIKE ROOM, THINKING OF ALL THE FOOD.
THE PURIS WILL BE ROUND AND FLUFFY, THE KACHORIS WILL BE SMELLING OF CARDAMOM.
IT IS SO LATE. THEY HAVE FORGOTTEN ME. WHAT IF THE PURIS FINISH? EVEN LAADLI HASN'T COME TODAY. I MUST GO AND SEE IF I CAN GET SOMETHING FOR MYSELF.
TEARS BEGAN TO WELL UP BUT KAKI CONTROLLED THEM. SHE WAS SCARED OF RUPA.





*A COLD DRINK PREPARED WITH MILK, ALMONDS, ROSE PETALS, ETC.

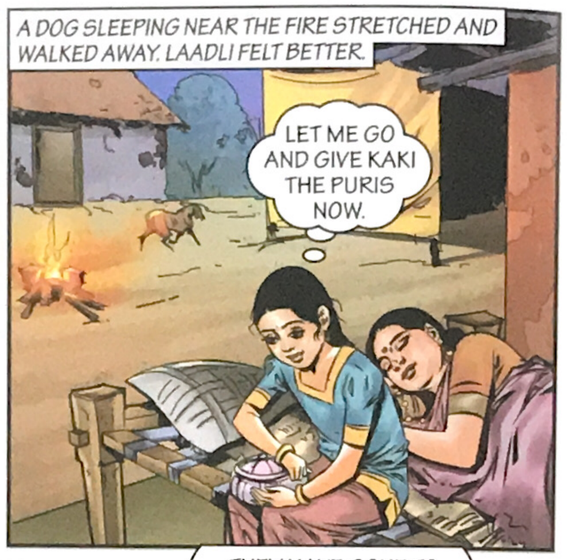




BUT KAKI'S THOUGHTS COULD NOT LEAVE THE COURTYARD.
THE PLATES MUST BE LAID FOR DINNER. THE GUESTS MUST BE WASHING UP, READY TO ENJOY THE FEAST.
THE WOMEN BEGAN TO SING. KAKI HUMMED ALONG WITH THEM FOR A WHILE.
I HAVE BEEN SINGING FOR A LONG TIME. THE GUESTS MUST HAVE FINISHED EATING. NO ONE HAS CALLED ME.
RUPA IS ANGRY. WHO KNOWS, SHE MAY NOT CALL ME AT ALL. BESIDES, WHY SHOULD SHE CALL ME? I AM NOT A GUEST. I CAN GO ON MY OWN.
KAKI CRAWLED OUT ONCE MORE, BUT TO HER BAD LUCK SHE HAD MISJUDGED AGAIN. THE GUESTS WERE STILL THERE.
WHO IS THIS OLD WOMAN?
LOOK OUT, SHE MAY TOUCH SOMEONE!

BUDDHIRAM WAS FURIOUS.
COME HERE, YOU!
WHY CAN'T WE GIVE KAKI LOTS OF PURIS TO EAT? WHY CAN'T SHE EAT BEFORE THE GUESTS DO?
AFTER THE GUESTS, THE FAMILY ATE AND THEN THE MUSICIANS, THE SERVANTS AND THE POOR PEOPLE FROM THE VILLAGE.
NO ONE CALLED KAKI. BUDDHIRAM AND RUPA HAD DECIDED TO PUNISH HER.
ONLY LITTLE LAADLI WORRIED ABOUT HER.
I WILL KEEP MY PURIS AND GIVE ALL OF THEM TO KAKI AS SOON AS I CAN.
THEN SHE WILL HUG ME AND GIVE ME LOTS OF LOVE.

THE CLOCK STRUCK 11. EVERYONE WAS ASLEEP. THE FLICKERING SHADOWS SCARED LAADLI.
WHAT IS THAT ON THE WALL?


A DOG SLEEPING NEAR THE FIRE STRETCHED AND WALKED AWAY. LAADLI FELT BETTER.
LET ME GO AND GIVE KAKI THE PURIS NOW.

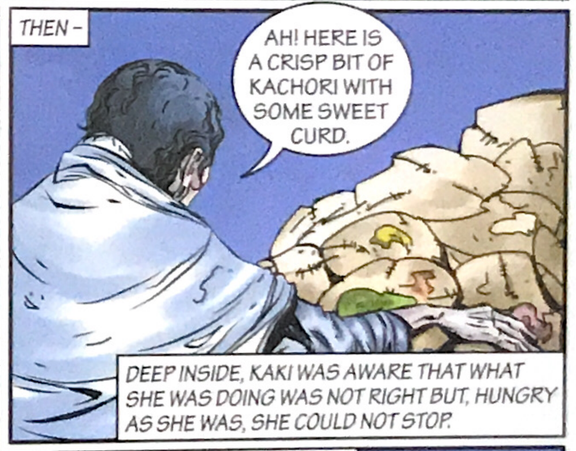
WHEN BUDDHIRAM HAD DRAGGED HER, KAKI HAD FAINTED. NOW, SHE REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS.
THEY HAVE GONE TO SLEEP WITHOUT FEEDING ME! DO THEY HAVE NO PITY FOR ME? THEY KNOW THAT I CANNOT SEE AND YET THEY SHOUT AT ME AND HUMILIATE ME IN FRONT OF PEOPLE.
KAKI'S GRIEF ALMOST CHOKED HER.

JUST THEN –
KAKI, GET UP, I HAVE BROUGHT PURIS FOR YOU.

AH! DID YOUR MOTHER SEND THEM? GIVE THEM TO ME.
NO, THESE ARE MY SHARE.

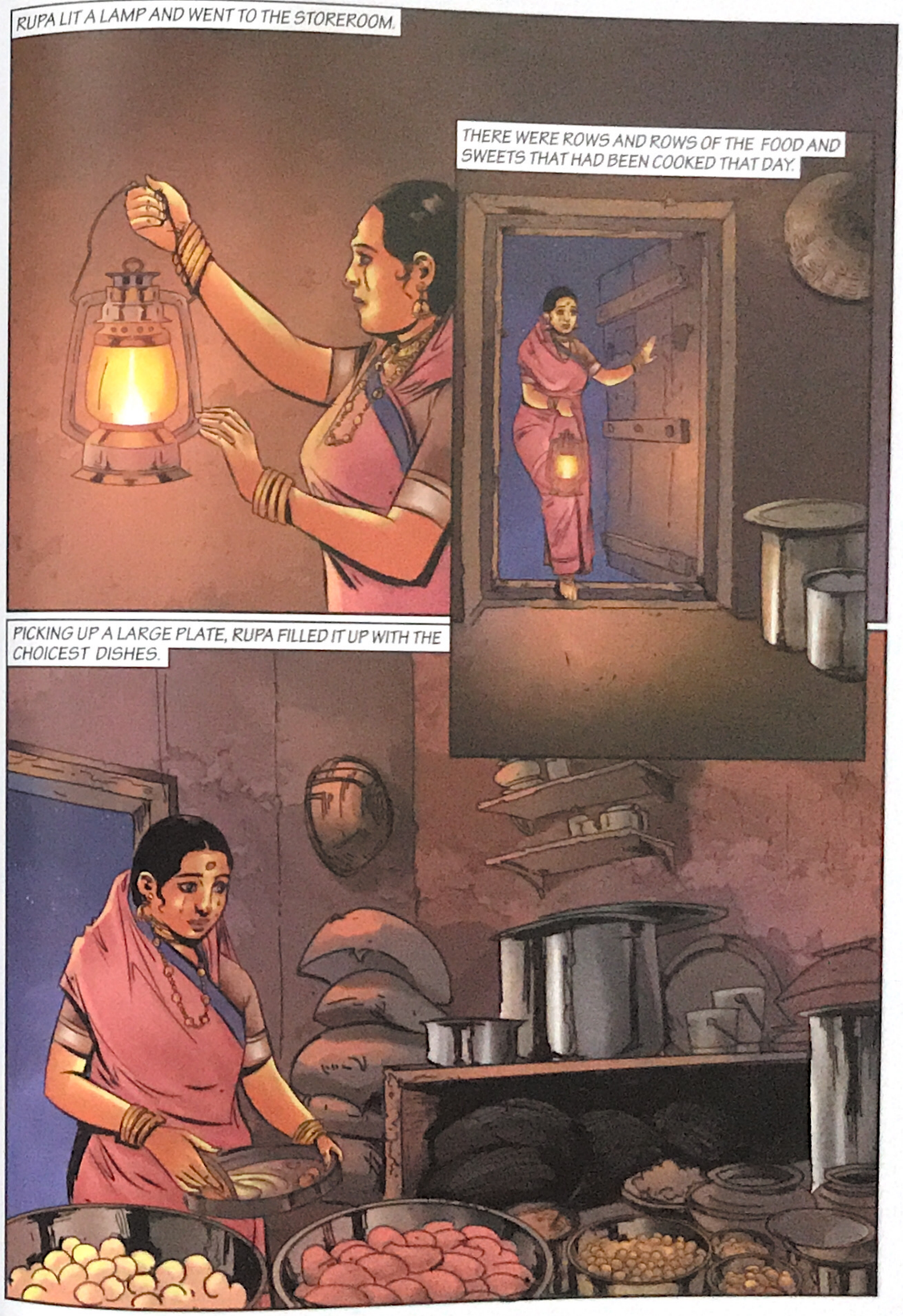
KAKI GOBBLED UP THE PURIS IN A TRICE.
ARE YOU FULL, KAKI?
NO, MY CHILD. GO AND GET ME SOME MORE FROM YOUR MOTHER.
SHE WILL BEAT ME. SHE IS SLEEPING.
THEN HOLD MY HAND AND TAKE ME TO WHERE THE GUESTS WERE EATING THEIR FOOD.
KAKI'S DESIRE FOR FOOD HAD OVERWHELMED EVERY OTHER SENSE.

LAADLI DID NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT KAKI WANTED BUT SHE TOOK HER WHERE THE GUESTS HAD EATEN AND PILED UP THEIR USED PLATES.


THEN –
AH! HERE IS A CRISP BIT OF KACHORI WITH SOME SWEET CURD.
DEEP INSIDE, KAKI WAS AWARE THAT WHAT SHE WAS DOING WAS NOT RIGHT BUT, HUNGRY AS SHE WAS, SHE COULD NOT STOP.

AND KAKI BEGAN TO EAT HER FEAST.

RUPA STIRRED IN HER SLEEP AND WOKE UP.
WHERE IS LAADLI?
OH! HOW COULD I ALLOW THIS TO HAPPEN?
TEARS WELLED UP IN RUPA'S EYES. SHE WAS FILLED WITH FEAR AND SORROW.
MY HUSBAND'S AUNT IS EATING THE LEFTOVER FOOD FROM USED PLATES! DEAR GOD, FORGIVE ME! DO NOT PUNISH ME FOR WHAT I HAVE DONE.
I HAVE SPENT SO MUCH TO KEEP MY HONOUR AND PLACE IN SOCIETY, BUT I HAVE NOT TAKEN CARE OF THE WOMAN BECAUSE OF WHOM I WAS ABLE TO DO SO. AND I HAVE DONE THIS BECAUSE SHE IS OLD AND HELPLESS.


RUPA LIT A LAMP AND WENT TO THE STOREROOM.
THERE WERE ROWS AND ROWS OF THE FOOD AND SWEETS THAT HAD BEEN COOKED THAT DAY.
PICKING UP A LARGE PLATE, RUPA FILLED IT UP WITH THE CHOICEST DISHES.

TAKING IT OUTSIDE, SHE PUT IT DOWN ON A MAT. THEN –

GET UP, KAKI. COME AND EAT YOUR DINNER...

UH!

...AND PRAY THAT I AM NOT PUNISHED FOR MY SIN. FORGIVE ME, FOR I HAVE WRONGED YOU GREATLY.

LIKE A CHILD WHO FORGETS A SCOLDING WHEN GIVEN A SWEET, KAKI FORGOT ALL THE WRONG DONE TO HER, AND SETTLED DOWN HAPPILY TO EAT. WITH ALL HER HEART, SHE BLESSED RUPA FOR HER KINDNESS.

RUPA SAT BEFORE HER WATCHING THE WONDERFUL SIGHT.

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